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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 001566

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF AND AF/E; LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PNAT](#) [SO](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: PDD CURRIES SOMALILAND VOTE, PROMISES RECOGNITION,  
ALIENATES OPPOSITION AT HOME

Classified By: Pol/Econ Erinn C. Reed for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: In a move aimed at currying the Djiboutian vote resident in Somaliland, Mohamed Daoud Chehem, President of the Djiboutian Party for Development (PDD), visited Hargeisa, Somaliland 1 December. While in Hargeisa, Chehem met with officials from Somaliland opposition party Kulmiye to discuss Djiboutian presidential elections slated for April 2005. Chehem also gave an interview to reporters from the Somaliland daily newspaper "Haatuf" following the meeting. During the meeting, and announced in his interview, Chehem stated the intention to recognize Somaliland should the opposition win in April. News of Chehem's unilateral advance, meeting with Somaliland opposition and interview with the press created an uproar among the opposition coalition, Union for Democratic Alternance (UAD). As a result, in a joint meeting 5 December, UAD officials unanimously voted to exclude PDD from the coalition. The opposition journal, La Realite, called Chehem's actions a flagrant violation of UAD's agreement to unanimity. Somaliland Foreign Minister Ismail places little stock in the ability of PDD to be victorious in a run for Djibouti's presidency. However, if it did win, Somaliland would welcome recognition, in Ismail's words, "with open arms." End Summary.

2. (U) A delegation from the Djiboutian opposition party Djiboutian Party for Development (PDD) traveled to Hargeisa at the invitation of Somaliland opposition party Kulmiye. Mohamed Daoud Chehem, President of PDD, and Hassan Mohamed Hassan, Vice president of PDD, met with the executive committee of Kulmiye to discuss upcoming presidential elections in Djibouti and a possible cooperation between the two oppositions. The meeting was held behind closed doors, but both sides spoke to the press afterward. In an interview with Somaliland daily newspaper, Haatuf, Chehem stated if the opposition won in April, Djibouti would recognize Somaliland as an independent nation. Kulmiye officials said that they support this declaration.

3. (U) The reaction to Chehem's statement among the opposition parties at home in Djibouti was less than enthusiastic. Chehem was lambasted for taking unilateral actions and speaking in the name of UAD without consultation. The leaders of the other three parties in UAD held a joint meeting 5 December to discuss Chehem's actions. In a press communique, the three leaders stated unanimously that PDD would be excluded from the coalition. The leaders cited repeated breaches of the UAD unanimity agreement, most notably Chehem's "illegitimate" announcement for presidential candidacy, as basis for the party's exclusion.

4. (U) In the 8 December edition of "La Realite", published by the Republican Alliance for Democracy (ARD), ARD said it remains faithful to its former president Ahmed Dini Ahmed's declaration in 1992 on recognition of Somaliland. However, the current leaders of ARD said they would never assume that the whole of UAD supported that statement without consultation. The UAD would be weakened, the article continued, by an individual interested in pursuing personal gain and ready to betray the hopes of people.

5. (C) Somaliland FM, Edna Ismail, commenting to Ambassador on the Kulmiye/PDD meeting, said it did not generate much public resonance, but had also been raised with her by President Guelleh. She said she believed that all know the chances of victory for PDD are slim and much hope is not placed on promises often made by campaigning politicians. "It goes without saying, however, that if they win and they do recognize Somaliland," she added, "we would welcome it with open arms." (Comment: This comment, in jest, should not be interpreted as an indication of support by Somaliland of the PDD. End Comment.)

6. (C) Comment: Somaliland is closely tied to Djibouti through its economy and border, but most importantly through familial relationships. It is a common practice for Djiboutians to retire to Somaliland because of their roots, cost of living and climate. It is rumored that in past elections the government authorities have managed vote collecting operations in Somaliland. Some believe the Government of Djibouti has given Somalilanders Djiboutian National Identity Cards in return for a vote for the ruling party. The actual number of Djiboutians living in Somaliland

is unknown, but estimated at around 2,500 persons - a large number in terms of Djiboutian elections.

17. (C) Comment cont: PDD's goal is most likely aimed at pulling votes away from RPP in Somaliland by offering recognition, something Guelleh cannot promise without stepping on the toes of several international partners. PDD's actions, according to earlier conversations with Chehem (see reftel), have been driven by the desire to divide the voting population as much as possible to prevent Guelleh from receiving a majority right off the bat. Chehem's talks with Kulmiye on cooperation would help in this task, potentially meaning Kulmiye would campaign for PDD among the Djiboutian community in Somaliland.

18. (C) Comment cont: Chehem is not known as a charismatic or popular individual in Djibouti. Information available to Post does not indicate that Chehem would be a candidate likely or able to attract the numbers necessary to defeat Guelleh. His strategy in catering to the Somaliland votes and utilizing cultural connections to divide the Djiboutian vote is cunning, but it is too soon to say whether it will bear any political fruit come April elections. End Comment.  
RAGSDALE